

# GRACE UNDER FIRE

By Bartholomew Clemente

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My father, Bartholomew Clemente, wrote this in-depth piece to share a poignant family event that was life-altering. Not only did my father experience this first-hand but relived it over and over again as family stories were retold (he also tape recorded these in the early 1960s). This takes place in Sicily where my father's family repatriated in 1933. He used actual first names and substituted family surnames from other generations in this rendition but used pseudonyms for his immediate family (perhaps because Sicilian naming conventions would have resulted in three Bartolomeos in this story – my dad, his cousin, and his maternal grandfather). Through this rendering dad filled in some of the conversations in order to more fully represent what people said or were implied to have said as well as communicate the range of emotions and attitudes that were clearly experienced during the time period.

Another reason he took time to add depth to this event was the deep love and respect he had for his father. This life event captures the essence of his father. Baldassare Clemente was always spoken of as ethical, honest, moral, and looked on as an arbiter of family issues. My dad admired these attributes in his dad and subsequently communicated these expectations to his children.

Badassano Catanzaro = Baldassare Clemente	Biagio Artale = Biagio Maltese
Anna Catanzaro = Anna Artale Clemente	Rosa Artale = Rosa Artale Maltese
Carl Catanzaro = Jasper Clemente	Antoinette Artale = Antoinette Maltese
Christina Catanzaro = Augustine Clemente	Giuseppe (Pino) Artale = Giuseppe Maltese
Diego Catanzaro = Bartholomew Clemente	Bartolomeo Artale = Bartolomeo Maltese
	Giovanina Artale = Giovanina Maltese
	Vincenza Artale = Vincenza Maltese
	Maria Artale = Maria Maltese

~ Rebecca Clemente.

The train from Palermo arrived at the station late in the afternoon just at dusk in the city of Castelvetro, Sicily. Diego was uncertain, the newness, the archaic surroundings, and the strangeness of everything were disturbing. Diego began to feel uneasy in this strange place. The Catanzaros had come to Sicily to begin a new life. Badassano, head of the family, had longed for and was now there to begin this life.

After a preliminary police inspection of their household belongings, the inspection revealed a shotgun. Badassano hoped to use it to hunt rabbits. The inspection was routine and facilitated by Badassano presenting a letter from the Italian Consulate stating that Badassano was repatriating. He was given a permit for the gun and the rest of the trunks were left unopened.

It was now dark, foreboding, and eerie, and more so once the black carriage drawn by a black horse came to pick them up. Diego, Badassano's youngest son, felt frightened and memories of the Dracula movie came back to him; the memory of the carriage scene when the young man was being taken to Dracula's castle. Diego was transported, reliving vicariously this scary and horrible moment, which certainly was about to take him to his doom. No good could come from this ride in a black carriage.

The carriage would eventually arrive at the Artale home. The street going away from the train station was dimly lit. It was now dark. The streets were narrow and took on a sinister and foreboding appearance. Diego became increasingly frightened and nudged closer to his father. Badassano, because he was aware of his children's uneasiness, chatted about the various sites he remembered from his childhood. It so happened that the road from the station went up a hill and passed by two of Uncle Tommaso's houses that had been bequeathed to Badassano. This patrimony was a large part of what helped Badassano to repatriate.

Shortly the carriage emerged on Via Vittorio Emanuele, taking them south to the

Piazza Principessa. Then they went west down the Via Trinita. The family, especially the children, felt that they were back in time to the Medieval Ages. The buildings were a panorama of antiquity. Quickly down the Trinita road to the Dolorata church with a right turn onto Via Cernaia which brought the carriage to Aunt Rosa and Uncle Biagio Artale's courtyard gate.

The Catanzaros, Badassano, Anna, and the children, Carl, Christina, and Diego, slowly emerged from the carriage and walked to the courtyard gate. Badassano paid the driver and thanked him. Time seemed to stand still and gave rise to contemplating who these cousins behind the gates were. What did they look like? What did they think? Carl, the oldest, reminded them that they would not be speaking English. Diego felt denuded and denied his culture, there were no points of comfortable references. All had to speak Sicilian, which was not unfamiliar to them.

Anna knocked on the door and waited for a moment then the door slowly opened with a figure on the other side. A sliver of light bounced onto Anna as the door gave way so that she was fully illuminated by the light. The noise of excitement, the joy of greeting, the sobbing and flow of tears embraced all. The family was now in a new home full of hope and delight.

Anna and her sister Rosa seeing each other after many years of separation, now embraced in loving endearment. Badassano was introduced along with the children.

“You must be tired.”

“What was the trip like?”

“How long were you on the ocean?”

“Tell us all about your trip!”

The room was dark, even with carbide light (no electric light was present); rendering all the family to appear dim, almost as though they had become their own shadows: Who was who

and who was the Catanzaro family to them, the Artales? Everyone was moving about so that each one was not distinguishable. The darkened room with the flickering carbide light cast dancing shadows on the walls of the room.

Once the commotion of greetings settled, they were able to speak comfortably. Rosa was hungry for news of the family and especially what happened to their mother Antonina and brother Filippo.

“What can I say,” replied Anna. “Mother died from her cancer. She suffered, oh, how she suffered. We gave her laudanum for her pain for there was nothing to be done. We were all left saddened and with a deep lonely feeling. Vita and her husband are doing fine in their laundry business. Yes, Filippo came to a tragic death, only 38-years-old from a spinal disease. He had such a nice bakery that was doing well, but his death left his widow and three girls so destitute and deeply distraught. Well, Giuseppe, our brother, was always a problem to our father, Bartolomeo, and it seems that he was in some shady business deals, but now he makes a living as a butcher. My greatest sorrow is Filippo dying, he was a good man. He took care of us, anticipating all our needs. He took the place of our dearly beloved father who died treacherously before his time. You remember Papa – Oh when I think about him my heart aches.” Anna's voice weakened and tears crowded her eyes.

Rosa, tearful, could not find the words and felt a deep-seated anguish of remembering Papa dying a horrible death. She said, “I was only fourteen years old. Mother was pregnant with Caterina; everyone was looking forward to the new baby. Papa never saw her and Caterina never saw Papa. It is too much, too much. We were well-off and in a moment we were poor and terrified of the future. Giuseppe was 17, young and spoiled. He mistakenly believed he could care for us. Mother became deeply depressed and we feared that she too would not live.

Papa had fallen off his horse and broken his back. On the road to the farm, his horse was startled by a noise and it reared up quickly, throwing Bartolomeo off his steed. He was taken to his home, but internal injuries brought about his death within four days. He was employed as a Campiero of the Baron Saporito's establishment, a very valuable member of the Saporito Enterprise. He was a great father, reliable, and a great loss to his dear family.”

Anna listened and felt tired and overcome with grief as they joined in loving memory of Bartolomeo. They embraced, cried, and mumbled words of comfort which could not be heard over the sobbing. They were one now - so happy, so fulfilled, and it seemed so unbelievable to be standing together after so many years.

Cousin Pino and Bartolomeo inquired, “Where is your luggage?”

“I have arranged a carter to bring them here,” replied Badassano.

Biagio was curious how the Catanzaros had no problem with the customs authorities. How was he able to bring in a shotgun and in addition to not being asked to reveal the contents of the trunks and valises? Mussolini was in power and the Fascists were uncompromising. Biagio was not quite sure who Badassano was because to flow unobstructed through customs in 1933 was only possible if one was a Fascist. He was not aware that Badassano had a letter recommending him to the authorities of his repatriation. “Badassano, how were you free to move easily through customs?”

Badassano, with a smile, jokingly said, “After they saw all the trunks and valises, it was obvious I wasn't a tourist.”

“Oh, yes, you must be hungry. I made some soup,” said Rosa. “Excuse me. I have to help Giovanina get the rest of the food.”

Uncle Biagio, a tall, handsome man wearing a mustache and revealing a weather-beaten,

rugged face, sat upright in his chair, making small talk with Badassano. He kept himself rigid, thus revealing his early army training in the Bersaglieri. This was a special Italian army unit that enjoyed a reputation similar to the U.S. Marine Corps.

In a more serious tone, Badassano mused, “You know Biagio, with more land and my Uncle Tommaso's houses I plan a new life in Sicily.” Biagio did not reply but asked if Badassano would like to come to the table because the food was ready.

Everyone came to the table and ate the food in silence. Soup and brown bread cut from a large oval-shaped loaf was offered and it tasted good and substantial. Anna made sure that Carl, Christina, and Diego ate all that was on their plate. She wanted them to show respect through their acceptance of this hospitality, yet the taste of the soup was a mystery.

Carl, Christina, and Diego became aware that the air began to fill with an odor of urine and manure. Where did this come from? When cousin Giovanina went into the adjoining room, which was the kitchen, you could see a horse in the stable stall just beyond. Badassano and Anna knew that horses were housed in city dwellings but the children were surprised and unprepared.

Diego was not able to eat his soup because the stench of the stable overpowered the delicious taste of the home cooked soup. This added to his anxiety that began during the carriage ride, imagining he would certainly end up at Dracula's castle. Diego was captured by the inevitable and at the age of twelve would rather be somewhere else than here. What could his parents have been thinking? This was not a place to be.

Carl and Christina engaged in a conversation with Cousin Maria. They struggled with Sicilian words forsaking their English. It was confusing and they were in a hidden panic, saving the moment from disaster by feigning hospitality.

Christina asked, “Where is the toilet? Where? Oh my, here! Here in the stable - there is no toilet paper!”

Maria replied, “Use the cloth towel.”

“I don't like this,” thought Christina, and at that moment she also thought of escape, escape back to the States. Carl, too, silently voiced the same wish as he plotted how to leave Sicily. “I am going to leave in one year and go back to the States,” thought both of them. Diego became frightened by the loss of the familiar and realized he was too young and helpless to leave. He was bound to his parents. Carl and Christina were not going to care for him. Diego had only his father and mother. It was purely one of self-survival.

“Rosa,” asked Anna, “will you have a sheepherder come to the house and sell me milk for my children. The children enjoy warm milk with a spot of coffee for breakfast.”

“I will have Bartolomeo send a sheepherder to deliver milk each day,” replied Rosa. Anna thought Diego being fearful and refusing to eat would need some remedy. Aunt Rosa thought cod-liver oil would help.

“Cod-liver oil, my God, not that!” thought Diego.

After the meal, Anna opened the conversation of when they could sit down to discuss the bought lands and finding a house until all was settled.

“There is plenty of time. You just arrived and all of you are tired. It is now late and we have bedding for all of you, so let's get comfortable. There is plenty of time to get to serious things. Do not worry, we will look at everything,” reassured Rosa.

The day had been long and night slowly covered them in its wrappings. Rosa and Giovanina had made room in the house for the Catanzaros and the Artale children would be staying with their married sister, Antoinette.



Diego welcomed going to bed. The mix of voices and following everyone's thoughts had exhausted him. The darkness took over and he was eager to sleep and rest on a straw mat on his first night in Sicily. Falling asleep came slowly and his mind was trying to come to grips with everyone and everything. Aunt Rosa, Uncle Biagio, Giovanina, Giuseppe (Pino), Bartolomeo, Vincenza, and Maria had slowly taken on their own recognizable persons for at first, they all seemed like one large mystery.

Morning came and the sun rays penetrated the gloom of the previous night. Diego awakened unsure of the room now filled with light. The room was austere with the smell of straw filling his nostrils and he started to cry fearfully. Diego sensed betrayal.

Giovanina came, "Don't be afraid. Come let me hold you."

"I am scared," said Diego as tears ran down his face. His sobs were uncontrollable. "I want my Papa."

Giovanina held him and said soothing words and her warmth slowly began to comfort him. "I will get your father, just try to relax."

Badassano had been awake for some time and had received Carl's and Christina's ultimatums. They wanted to leave Sicily as soon as possible.

Diego waited for his father and in a voice of betrayal accused his father, "You are a traitor!" Badassano reassured him that all would be well and that yes, Sicily was different. "In time, it will be just like any other place."

Diego trusted his father and said, "I am scared!"

"Yes, I know. Get dressed and have some breakfast. Your mother bought some goat's milk and with some fresh bread, things will settle down."

Anna prepared the milk with a touch of coffee so that Diego could dip the thick slices of

bread into the large cup of warm latte. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled the room with familiarity in a place so strange. It was welcome and familiar dunking a slice of bread and sopping up the delicious fragrant latte caffè. Anna comforted her children and tried to reassure them. Diego still wondered in spite of his mother's reassurances.

Pino and Bartolomeo were not around. They had gone to work. Uncle Biagio was home and Diego was not sure why. Maybe he stayed back to be with them. Aunt Rosa, along with the girls, was making bread. The household was busy with domestic activity.

Later in the day, the carter arrived with the trunks and valises. What a relief since those pieces of luggage contained all that they owned. Aunt Rosa was curious what Anna had brought and especially anxious to see the kitchenware novelties that came from America. Anna teased them with a few articles (a potato masher, a hand mixer, and an apple corer) and the rest were temporarily put into storage.

Anna was pensive, mulling over her thoughts, how come Biagio was not working and no words were spoken about the Artale's obvious state of poverty. None of the children except Antoinette were married. Giovanina in an off-the-cuff remark said that there were no suitors and no dowry for her and her sisters. Anna concluded that this was a family in trouble. This had never been alluded to in letters. Why had they not revealed their poverty, especially now when the world economy was in a depression and poverty was endemic?

Rosa and Biagio announced that evening that a day of celebration to welcome the Catanzaros would be held in the countryside. They had a farm at Porto Sarvo (Gates of Salvation) and they had planned to slaughter a kid and roast it over an open fire pit. Anna and Badassano were excited about how enjoyable it would be for all three of their children. For Anna and Badassano it was a chance to recapture their Sicilian soul and strengthen their resolve

to fulfill their dreams and plan a new future.

The day arrived and all preparations were complete for the outing at Porto Sarvo. Badassano, along with Anna, joined Rosa in preparing the food. All the men prepared the fire to roast the kid. Biagio and sons were moved as they watched Badassano basting the kid over the open fire. Rosa and the girls were setting a rugged country table with vegetables, fruits, and loaves of bread to accompany the roasted meat.

All seemed settled with the entire family. The afternoon was filled with small talk, stories, and hopes for the future. All was comfortable and familiar. The meal in the country seemed just right making all feel safe and at home in Sicily.

Badassano began to reminisce. "It is nice here, just like I remember; the quiet countryside; the fresh air. It is tranquil to see the trees. I am looking forward to having a farm that will be productive; to cultivate many fruit trees and I want to cultivate vegetables. When I was young, I approached my Uncle Filippo, my mother's brother, for a loan to purchase land. He was skeptical and refused my request. With no future, in 1906, I decided to emigrate to America with my pal Giuseppe Spallino. But once I inherited houses and land from my Uncle Tommaso, the idea rekindled that I might have a new chance. Life seems at times to ever spring new possibilities one's way even after other ways have faded." There was silence from all and heavy silence to his thoughts...just silence.

At dusk, it was now time to return back to the city. Everyone pitched in and packed the wagon and made ready to leave after a friendly eventful day.

Badassano looked around and murmured, "I am home."

Late that evening Badassano asked Pino, "What do you plan to do tomorrow?"

"Why?"

“If you are going back to the farm, I'd like to tag along.”

“Sure,” replied Pino. “Nothing would please me more.”

“So it is set. Oh, I think it would be good to have Carl and Diego come along.”

The next day the men left for the countryside. The weather was perfect being mild and sunny. Badassano sat in the driver seat of the wagon and took over the reins. It all came back to him and he smiled. He was pleased with himself. “Once one learns to be a carter one never forgets. Yes! It feels good to be here,” mused Badassano.

Porto Sarvo was close to town so they soon arrived and found themselves in the campagna (countryside) with lush trees loaded with fruit giving the orchard a vision of succulent abundance. The ground was a carpet of wheat undulating in the breeze. Land is dear in Sicily. Every cultivatable area had to bear growth for sustenance. One needed enough land to live reasonably well. Badassano brought the wagon to a halt and all disembarked. Pino released the horse from its harness and let him roam about. Bartolomeo unloaded a heavy tool bag letting it down easily.

“Give me the scythe,” said Badassano. The scythe had a curved blade about twelve inches long. This was a formidable sharp tool and with a firm hard stroke, wheat stalks gave way easily. The stalks were gathered with one's free hand. Badassano took the scythe in his right hand and bent over so that he was able to sweep the scythe through the base of the tall wheat stalks and with a graceful movement of the left hand gather the cuttings and tie them into a bouquet with his right hand while still holding the scythe.

“My God I can still do it!”

At that moment Diego yelled, “A snake, a snake.” Badassano's cutting the wheat had disturbed a snake from its resting place. “Pa a snake!” Badassano picked up a hoe and with a

swift blow to its head, killed the snake. The excitement of killing the snake diverted all from cutting the wheat. There was a moment to cool down and be thankful that no one was hurt.

Badassano made sure the snake was dead.

Badassano caught his breath, relaxed, and quietly said, “We must be close to the land your parents bought for me. Let's go see them; I am anxious to view them. Coming to the campagna has invigorated me, now it is time for more serious things.” Badassano high spirited, again excitedly said, “Let's go.”

What followed was a moment, just a split second, that seemed to last forever—a silence. The air stood still with no movement of clouds and the sun lost its heat and luster. The silence was unbearable, in reality, it was a very short moment before Pino spoke. “Uncle Badassano, there is no land. We never bought the land with the money you sent us.”

The answer shattered what seemed an eternity as it emerged. Badassano shocked, replied with an incredulous, rasping voice, “It is not possible for I did send the money! Money enough to buy the lands I needed. I need those lands to make a living. You say this in jest.”

Bartolomeo moved close to Badassano and in a voice barely audible said, “Pino is telling the truth. My parents did not buy the lands.”

Badassano straightened up and stood erect still with the scythe in his hand, faced the brothers and spoke quietly, “Let's go back to the house.” Silence filled the ride back. Giving all time to recruit one's thoughts to ferret out the tragic news. A snake had just been killed. Was this an omen? One moment of joy and an accomplishment; a long journey into a well-planned dream even down to where every parcel of land was to be cultivated. Even as to the harvest and, not least, the monetary fruits which would render them the unsuspected, a sign of success. This was the dream fulfilled and succored over the years.

In a Greek tragedy, the hero must prove his worth by overcoming obstacles with feats of labor. Badassano was entering a world now made strange by what had just happened to him. He was caught off guard and shaken. What to do; a sudden confrontation of a betrayal? For sure he requested the silence of Pino and Bartolomeo. They were the innocent messengers, not the target of Badassano's bewilderment and emerging anger.

While the men left for Porto Sarvo, Rosa and the children were busy doing household chores. There was no urgency on Rosa's part to discuss important matters so dear to Anna's heart. "We will talk about it later. There is a lot of time. You just got here and you must rest from the stressful journey."

Anna reassured Rose that the ocean trip had moments of concern. While there were a couple of stormy days and then one's appetite was lacking, no meals were neglected. Carl never missed a meal.

Anna worried about why Rosa delayed the discussion as to why she was back in Sicily; added to this Carl and Christina revolting at the medieval surroundings. There were no electric lights, no modern bathroom facilities, only straw mattresses, no parlor, and no modern kitchen; plus the kitchen was next to the stable and latrine. But more so Diego was visibly shaken by his new surroundings. He was depressed and insecure about his relatives. Diego felt safe only with his father and mother. His brother and sister were plotting their return to the United States. Self-survival was ever present in Carl and Christina. This added to Diego's anxiety about his future.

Later in the day, Anna again inquired about the lands and Rosa reassured her that she would discuss it. Rosa deflected Anna by saying that she had to run an errand. "We will talk about your concerns as soon as the men return." Anna was peeved and disturbed by not being

able to have a friendly sister-to-sister talk.

Aunt Rosa was fastidious at home and kept a clean house. She was well-groomed. Later, Anna was to learn that Rosa frequented her hairdresser once a month. She dressed well and used a black shawl draped over her shoulders. She was in command of all and presided over her daughters. The oldest, Antoinette, was married to Signore Alta and had two sons, Francesco and Biagio. Giovanina was like her mother, dependable in the affairs of the household. Giovanina was beautiful, handsome, and guided by a sense of self-assuredness. Diego became fond of her. She was good to him. She catered to him and made life comfortable for him. Vicenza and Maria were young girls and they were heavily protected from the outside world.

Giovanina went to her mother and said, “Why don't you tell Aunt Anna what the truth is? How do you hope to explain what we have done? I fear for what they will do once they know we bought no lands.”

“I know, I know! Maybe it will not be too bad,” said Rosa. “Your Uncle Badassano inherited lands from his mother and his uncle who also left him three houses. Surely they have enough money to live on,” Rosa tried to reassure Giovanina.

Giovanina could hardly believe what she heard. “Mother, they will be angry and don't you fear for your life? You and Dad took their money and did not buy land, explain that to them! Don't you fear reprisal?”

“I don't know,” said Rosa, searching into her very being for a place of comfort, but she was not able to find any. The truth was evident. She had remained quiet, never corresponding with Anna as to the truth of why no lands were purchased. It was now turning into a shameful situation by not addressing the problem. Her fear and shame were at the core of why she had

remained silent and now the moment when all would be revealed was unwelcomed.

“Mother, you and Dad have brought disgrace and dishonor to our family! We will pay a dreadful price for this carelessness.”

Rosa slowly replied in a muffled voice, “I don't know how this will end. I dread facing my sister, but more so her husband, Badassano. I am afraid!”

“When will you tell them?”

“In due time.”

There was silence on the way back to town and the men had agreed that nothing would be said until Badassano was ready to inquire about the unbought lands. Badassano needed time to clear his mind. He was struggling with the feelings of surprise, anger, and his gut was tied into knots. A primitive murderous impulse needed to be restrained. Chaos resided in his thoughts and he was unable to choose what scenario to go with. The reality of the situation slowly sank in. How can it be that having been refused earlier in life by his Uncle Filippo and now with no lands bought was to deny him, again, an opportunity that supposedly was so well planned?

The day was somber, no one was spontaneous. It seemed everyone moved with guarded animation. However, later Badassano in the freedom of the bedroom told Anna, “Pino, today at Porto Sarvo, said that your sister and husband did not buy lands with the money we sent. We are here and have no lands. I am confused and used all my strength to hold in my anger. The boys told me the truth and I saw in their eyes tears and remorse. They were not able to explain what their parents had done.” Badassano caught himself as tears rolled down his cheeks, trying not to sob.

“It's not true Badassano; please say it's not true. Oh, my God all those years of work,



planning and uprooting the children. What, what could be going on? They didn't warn us—my own sister. It is too hard to believe. We need to know and we must know why now.”

Badassano composed himself, “We need a lawyer and we have to be guided by the LaBruzzo family in Palermo. We need to face this calmly and have a plan as to how best to solve this ugly turn of events.”

“Oh, my God,” said Anna, “all the stuff we bought, all the hopes and dreams, and now it is a nightmare.”

“Tomorrow,” said Badassano, “We will see. We will see.”

“They are so poor and the boys have to work hard, yet my sister acts like a Signora.”

“Pino and Bartolomeo are friendly. On the way to Porto Sarvo, I told them of my dream. Little did I know that is no longer to be.”

Anna and Badassano were tired and hoped to get some sleep. On the morrow, life would begin again with no visible end game.

The next day Diego and Carl, recoiling from the sad news, made Carl surer that he was leaving Sicily. “With no lands, Dad cannot make it. So I am telling Dad I want to go back home.” Carl thoughtfully wondered how his parents were taking this news.

When Diego said, “Dad and Mom must be hurting. Maybe Dad and Mom will think of something.”

“I hope so,” said Carl.

“Who is going to tell Christina about this?”

“Mom will,” said Carl.

The May air is mild and full of sunshine in Sicily and going to the outside courtyard, secure from the eyes of strangers, was welcomed and Diego eagerly waiting for the arrival of the

goat herder. The milk was fresh. Mom prepared eggs and warm latte coffee. The three children sat down and started to eat when Carl said to Christina, “We are in trouble.” Carl went on to tell Christina all that had happened.

“That's terrible,” said Christina, “What are Dad and Mom going to do?”

“I don't know but we better say nothing until Mom and Dad say something.”

After breakfast, Anna decided to go shopping and took Diego with her. Christina stayed behind and helped Giovanina with chores. Badassano, a bit weary but composed, told Carl to come with him to see the lawyer. He needed to process the will of his Uncle Tommaso and now, he needed help with the present situation. Badassano and Anna had decided to wait on confronting the Artales concerning the lands which had not been purchased. Biagio and Rosa were still curiously silent.

Badassano and Carl were to go on foot to see the lawyer. The lawyer's office was near the Municipal Building. As Badassano left, Anna whispered in his ear and said, “We have to do something about Diego. He has not taken interest in anything and always seems close to tears.”

“I'll see what I can do. I'll see you later. Not a word!”

Badassano hurried Carl to come along, the lawyer was waiting. They went through the gates leading to the street from the courtyard. The street was busy with vendors shouting out their wares.

“Listen!” said Badassano to Carl.

“I have fresh fruit - fresh fruit at reasonable prices!”

On and on shouted fishermen.

“Milk fresh from goats” shouted the shepherd - for the air was full of excitement. It was May and the air was heating up as the day progressed. This day's siesta would be welcomed.

Badassano with Carl tagging along walked deliberately down the street and then straight to the lawyer's office.

The lawyer, Signor Basile, was ever so accommodating. After the usual greetings and small talk, Signor Basile said, "Yes, I have your Uncle's Will and have read it. I will then prepare the necessary Affidavit and render the properties to you. The Will leaves you the houses and land in the Canolotto district. There is a small problem with the housekeeper. She is living in one of the houses. Your Uncle allowed her to stay until you took possession. I do not know if there are any items in the house that belonged to your uncle, but perhaps she can tell you."

"Thank you, but I have a more pressing situation. I returned to Sicily to start a truck farm business and now through my nephews, I was told that my brother and sister-in-law did not buy the needed farmland. They used the money for their personal needs and never—never one word by letter to notify me of this. With the bought lands and what I have, I could then start my business. But without them, I am unable to begin. I did not come to Sicily only to repatriate, but to advance my position in life. It is now shattered."

"Signor Catanzaro, you must first confront your in-laws. Are they able to compensate you?"

"Well," said Badassano, "If what I see of them is true, they are in dire straits. They are poor and I know that my brother-in-law is unemployed. The two young sons must be supporting them."

Thoughtfully Signor Basile replied, "You have a difficult task ahead, confronting them. If I understand the relationship, the sister-in-law is your wife's sister."

"Yes, that is so." I have a friend in Palermo, Senor LaBruzzo, who I want to visit to help me ferret this out and I have all the confidence in his help. After that, I will act," said Badassano

emphatically!

Signor Basile interjected, “I will find out the extent of Signor Artale's property and monies in the bank. These properties may be compensation for your losses. When do you plan to confront Signor Biagio Artale?”

“Today. Never, never did I foresee this turn of events. My wife and I worked long hours and saved—saved, for this moment. And now, it is not to be! I have been betrayed and my family suffers from the uprooting. We were doing fine in America,” said Badassano ruefully. “Please develop the case and today I will inform Biagio that I plan to go ahead with my plan to accuse him of fraud and embezzlement.”

“Yes, go ahead. I will be in contact with you once I have all the information. Also, let me know what the LaBruzzos think on this matter.”

Badassano and Carl walked slowly down the dark corridor from the office into the bright, sunny day.

“I have to think—not a word to anyone. You understand Carl?”

“Yes, Papa.”

They approached the Piazza Cavour and Badassano remembered that he had to see to Diego being situated. He remembered that the barbershop was in the Piazza Cavour. Badassano walked quickly and introduced himself to the proprietor.”

“Signor Cusumano, Buon Giorno.”

“Please, what can I do?”

“I may be imposing, but I have a boy of twelve and I hoped that you would do me the pleasure of apprenticing him here in your barbershop. We just came from America and he needs to be occupied, otherwise, he will become bored and on top of that, he may become ill. As a

father, I need to have him out of the house and kept busy.”

Salvatore Cusumano courteously replied, “Yes, of course. I heard that an American family was in town. I would be honored to have a young apprentice and you are in luck, for I am in need of an apprentice. I am happy to be of help.”

Thank you, Signor, you have been God sent, not only for my son but for me. Would all problems be solved so soon and with your kindness! When may I bring my son Diego to you?”

“Let us say tomorrow morning.”

“Fine. I will have him here in the morning. Buon Giorno.”

Badassano, now with a small weight lifted with Diego starting as a barber apprentice, turned his thoughts to weightier problems.

“Pa, what am I going to do?” asked Carl.

“We will see. I need you with me.”

“But what about Christina, Pa?”

“Well, your mother will find something. Let's go back and tell your mother what we have done. She is waiting.” Silence cloaked them as they walked down Via Calletto to Piazza Alfieri, then north on Via Cernaia. It was siesta, time to rest and collect one's thoughts. Hardly anyone was in the streets. The world seemed deserted. No sooner than a few steps they were past the delicatessen store and they were at the door of the courtyard. Heavy with a myriad of thoughts, Badassano was mentally organizing how to go about confronting the Artales and the added task of consulting with Anna.

Anna had prepared minestrone for lunch and everyone sat quietly and ate in silence.

When lunch was over, Badassano asked, “Where are Rosa and Biagio?”

Giovanina replied, “They ate and went to visit Antoinette.”

Turning to Diego he said, “Tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock, you will come with me to start as an apprentice at this nice barbershop. It will give you something to do and also you will learn to cut hair and shave. It will be good for you.”

“I am scared, you know I have to talk Sicilian and that's hard!”

“No, no, you will be fine. Signor Cusumano is a gentle soul and very ready to help.”

Anna was happy to know that Diego would now be busy and out of the house learning a trade. Anna added, “You will lather men's faces,” she continued, proud that Diego would learn a trade, but also have a place to spend his time.

How now to proceed to solve the larger, unwelcome turn of events? (Feelings evoked might be characterized as those felt when seeing the warning of Dante's *Inferno's* epitaph over the door to hell, “All hope abandon ye who enter here.”)

After siesta, Rosa and Biagio returned. Anna and Badassano took Rosa and Biagio aside and Badassano told them what their sons had revealed the day before. Rosa startled, but not without composure said, “We were out on the street because Biagio was let go as Campiero di la Principessa Pignatelli.”

“Biagio,” said Badassano. “I was stunned when your sons told me that you did not buy lands with the money I sent to you. The words I heard were unbelievable—so unbelievable that at first, I thought they were joking, and then they both said, ‘No, Uncle Badassano, we are saying the truth.’ I could hardly hold in the anger I felt, but I did manage to ask Pino and Bartolomeo to not say anything until I spoke to both of you.”

“If I may,” started Biagio lamely, “Land to purchase was difficult to find. I really never thought that with the world depression, that you would uproot your family to come to this miserable island, but you kept on sending money and it was not until you wrote and said you

were definitely coming...I urged Rosa that we should say something.”

“Are you saying that Rosa was at the core of using our money and you sat idly by?” asked Badassano.

“Rosa,” inquired Anna, “What is Biagio saying; that you were in on this and willing to not inform us of your plight? We were serious about our wish to buy land for a business enterprise. My husband sent plans outlining how we wanted to grow a variety of plants. This was done over a number of years—what nonsense that we were not serious. On top of this you wrote saying that all was well; never a word about Biagio's loss of his position. We were never aware that Biagio was no longer employed by the Principessa Pignatelli as a Campiero. So you then used our money to live on and hoping that we would never come to Sicily.”

“Yes,” answered Rosa and Biagio.

“We never wanted to harm you but thought that you wanted to return and you would be able to manage with the houses and property you had,” said Biagio

“I must tell you Biagio that I went to counsel with a lawyer and I urge you to do the same. For the time being for the ease of living together, we will respect each other and solve this in a legal manner. I plan to remodel the main house my uncle left me and sell the other two,” said Badassano.

It was an exceedingly awkward moment, but the two families had to respect each other's position and not do any unnecessary physical harm.

That night Badassano and Anna talked, trying to find a way out while not irreparably harming the Artale family. Anna pleaded with Badassano not to act hastily. The Artale children were fine young people and innocent of their parents' indiscretions.

“What am I to do?” he said. Again, “What am I to do?” he said in an exhausted voice

almost imperceptible to the ear.

Anna supported Badassano by saying that with the lawyer's help and a visit to the LaBruzzo family a way would be found to ferret out the truth.

“Fine,” said Badassano, “I will send a telegram to the LaBruzzos in Palermo in the morning.”

Rosa and Biagio were at their daughter's home sipping coffee heavily laden with large amounts of sugar. Espresso coffee, heavy and thick, had to be sipped carefully. Rosa spoke thoughtfully, saying, “I don't think my sister Anna believes our story about you losing your position, Biagio. I failed to tell her that you lost your position because of our decision to not leave the apartment at Principessa Pignatelli. The administrator insisted that we leave the apartment so that remodeling could be done, and because we refused to leave, the administrator discharged you. I just told her that others were let go. Do you think that if we tell her the truth about our stubbornness, she will believe that?”

“Why not?” said Biagio.

“I just don't think Anna is that gullible? She might just think that you lost your position because of the economic depression. She might be kind and view it as you being laid off.”

“I had every intention of paying the monies back once I found new employment,” said Biagio enthusiastically.

“Oh my, what have we done? My sister and family are here and we have acted as though nothing happened.” Rosa gasped trying desperately to avoid crying. She felt the full impact of her wrong, the wrong brought on her sister.

Anna was loved by Rosa and she remembered bringing solace to Anna when their father,



Bartolomeo, died unexpectedly. Anna was only six years old and Rosa was a proud young lady when their father died. The whole family was devastated emotionally and financially with their mother Antonia terrified out of her wits as to how to provide for the family. The poverty, the sadness, and the disorienting event made Rosa less proud and more comforting to young Anna. Her memory touched the essence of how, now, Anna was in a vulnerable situation with her having wrongfully taken the money. How could she ever comfort her sister? She had stolen from her and added to this by not forewarning Anna and Badassano that there were no lands and no money.

“They will sue and then there will be nothing for us and our children. Nothing, absolutely nothing. Biagio, help me! Please Biagio, how are we to manage? What is about to happen will swallow us up and no one will care!” Rosa was inconsolable, frightened of nothingness, just like when her father died tragically.

Biagio came to her and held her, realized the enormity of what was unfolding. “We made a wrong decision, thinking we could make good the monies we used. Never thought we would end up as thieves. I never thought of myself like that. I was a good soldier—the best. I was in the Bersagliere. Perhaps, if we admit our shortcomings and the truth of what really happened, they will be lenient?”

Rosa then added as though she had a revelation, “Badassano does have three houses and land from his uncle and the lands from his mother so he could make a simple beginning. Later he should be able to rent lands. We have to convince them that we did not deliberately extort but unfortunate circumstances intervened!”

Biagio and Rosa were tired and exhausted. They went to bed hoping for a night's rest and perhaps a reason to placate the Catanzaro family. After a short prayer, they got into bed and

slept the night through.

Daybreak came and everyone awakened early. Badassano had promised Diego that he would walk him to the barbershop. Badassano also wanted to arrange a car to take all of the family to visit Paolo LaBruzzo for consultation. He needed to be familiar with the law and determine the best way to have restitution. Should Badassano call in the Carabinieri (military force charged with police duties) or pursue it in a civil court?

Rosa and Biagio entered the room and appeared emotionally sad. Anna offered them coffee and again reminded them that she and Badassano would be civil and try to understand what happened. Anna went over the events of Biagio's unemployment and the life of poverty. She stated that she could appreciate the lure of money sent to them and the temptation to use it for their everyday needs. The lack of lands available argument was weak in Anna's mind for all they had to do was say so. They never did and the worst of all did not warn them of the absence of land just before the Catanzaros set sail for Sicily. This was hard to accept.

“Rosa,” said Anna, “I can understand your plight, but you do not realize the terrible circumstances you put my family in. Poverty I can understand, but not callousness not to be upfront with us. Rosa, you thought of yourself and it is somehow not just ignorant but plain stupid. Your reasons are not enough. Biagio’s loss of employment was your concern, but taking our money to solve your problem was not right.”

Rosa had no ready answer and said in an almost inaudible voice, “We were desperate. With the world depression we thought, how could they leave America? How wrong we were!”

Anna was perturbed and not fully accepting of Rosa's answers. “Let's wait, my husband will be back from the barber shop soon,” and with this Anna let the conversation go.

Rose and Biagio, prior to Badassano’s return, were upset and decided to leave before

Badassano came back, but they knew that Badassano would be talking with them again.

Badassano took Diego to the barber shop and left him in the care of Signor Cusumano. Diego was now set, but yet unaware of his duties. Diego was more interested in what his father said, “I am going to hire a taxi and we will go to Palermo.” A trip, wonderful!” thought Diego. Badassano then said, “A dio” and left feeling lightened in his emotions. Now to solve the larger problem facing the future of the family. “How could they use my money and rob me of my lifelong dream?”

After a taxi was hired and arrangements made, Badassano returned to the Artales. Anna told him about her conversation. He was relieved that much of the confrontation had taken place. Badassano had listened intently to what she said and absorbed every nuance of the turn of events with a studied attentiveness.

Anna asked, “What do you make of their story?”

“I don't know yet, but it is obvious they did not keep separate our business transaction and Biagio's loss of employment. By some mental quirk, they convinced themselves that our land money became their possession. They lived on it. A peculiar trait of immorality! This craziness is appalling.”

That evening Anna and Badassano decided that they would notify the Artales of their intentions. It was now evident that the events were serious and needed tending.

The evening meal was as pleasant as it might be and once the table was cleared, coffee was served. The older children of the Artales were invited to be present.

“My dear friends,” started Badassano and slowly collected his thoughts. “I find what I have heard is unbearable. You certainly were aware that to start an enterprise of a vegetable

farm, I needed adequate farmland. I need to make clear that I came here to live on the properties that were to be bought. I have uprooted my family and you seemed to lack compassion for what that means to me. I find what has happened unacceptable and I will find recourse here. I will say no more.” Badassano remarked with an air of authority and seriousness. “Anna let us take a walk and try to clear our minds. For the time we can be civil and accept that Biagio and Rosa acted in their best interest, but the matter is not over. I say this to you, Biagio and Rosa, that you have my word that I will be civil and restrained. I plan to move from this house as soon as I can repair my main house.”

Rose and Biagio both mumbled, “Thank you. Thank you.”

Badassano then said to Pino and Bartolomeo, “If you wish, I want to employ both of you in the construction of remodeling the main house.” Both young men were eager to be employed and thanked Uncle Badassano for his generosity.

A trip to Palermo by car was exciting for the children, a day away from gloomy surroundings. The day was warm and sunny, giving the mood a picnic-like flavor. Everyone got in the car to visit the LaBruzzos. Once in the countryside, the animals grazing and workers in their vineyards and orchards rendered an idyllic scene. It was a welcomed suspension from gut level pain. Badassano reviewed what he was going to say to Paolo LaBruzzo, trying various scenarios. He needed to know how to proceed in the courts of Italy and what he might expect. Anna reached over and took his hand and smiled at Badassano, reassuring him that all would be well.

The trip was not long and they were greeted at the entrance to the LaBruzzo home, “Good day. Nice to see you. It is my pleasure.” offered Paolo. He was always the gentleman.

For Badassano, Paola was his source of comfort and security; a firm anchor and most likely his salvation.

“Good day, Don Paolo, how is your health?”

“What can one expect at my old age? As long as one has health then everything is possible,” replied Don Paolo.

“Your wife, how does she feel? We heard that she was not feeling well.” remarked Anna.”

“Eh, Signora Anna, with diabetes it is never sure. Come let us go in. My wife and daughter are waiting.”

The lunch was enjoyed and the conversation was of the gossip variety. The women left to another room so that Don Paolo and Badassano could talk seriously. After Badassano explained the situation, Don Paolo, in a serious tone said, “You have recourse and that is to use the judicial system for you to gain possible compensation.” Badassano was reassured since he and Anna had seriously thought of court action. To hear it in consultation strengthened their resolve to go in this direction.

“Don Paolo, I thank you and my wife thanks you for your hospitality and guidance. You have been most helpful and I will keep you notified of how it will proceed.”

Anna turned to Signora Chiara and thanked her for the luncheon and her kind gesture of allowing them to visit.

“A dio, a dio,” and the Catanzaros returned to Castelvetro with feelings less burdened and with a way to tackle their misfortune.

Revenge was not to be; only justice was sought. Badassano and Anna now had to collect all the documents and letters which pertained to the land purchases. Moving toward a tort case

was the only way; after all, this was a family affair. Some form of restitution arose clearly in their minds, the longer they thought about the tragedy.

Early the next day, Badassano told Carl to come along. “I want to go to Campobello to visit with my childhood pal and go over what I have decided to do.”

Campobello, a quaint village at the center of a large agricultural area, was a few miles south of Castelvetro. Giuseppe Spallino had sent a carriage to bring Badassano to his country home and farm. They were very close for they had emigrated to America as young men. Badassano remained in America, but Giuseppe went back and settled in Campobello. He was a successful agriculturist and was able to fend off the fascism of Mussolini.

As the visit was winding down, Giuseppe said, “You know, Badassano, even if you get Artale's properties, you will not be able to do what you planned.”

“Yes, I know plus my children being unhappy here.”

“Badassano, this Italy is not for you. There are too many restrictions and loss of personal freedom. I advise you to get out of this country. Your children will be indoctrinated into fascism and who knows what the future holds. Germany and Italy are re-arming and I believe that something bad is going to happen. Get your day in court, but as I love you dearly, leave Sicily. Your plans to repatriate are not going to work.”

“I had a dream of a large orchard and a fine farm and now it is gone. I have to take your advice very seriously.” This was wrenching for Badassano.

Giuseppe put his arm around Badassano and emphatically said, “Get out of here!”

That night Badassano and Anna reviewed what had transpired. “Don Paolo and my friend Giuseppe Spallino thought that we should go ahead with the court action. It is the only way,” said Badassano, reassuring and fortifying his decisive conviction.

Badassano told Anna what Giuseppe said and she replied, "Let's get the court out of the way and then prepare to leave Sicily. We have no other way and I hurt that my sister, Rosa, and her family will have to suffer. They brought it on themselves. It can only be their stupidity."

The remodeling of the house was coming to an end. Pino and Bartolomeo helped in the construction and Badassano had compensated them well. He had come to respect Pino and Giovanina, who remained friendly throughout the weeks before the civil suit was to be heard. Once the house was finished, some furniture was bought and the family moved in. Life became more orderly and private.

"This is so nice. This could have been our future," remarked Anna. "We have to face a more uncertain day. How sad!"

The date for the court was set by the bailiff of the court. Signor Basile notified Badassano of the day and time. He wanted to review their brief which would be used in the suit. Biagio Artale was notified along with his lawyer, Signor Farfalla.

Signor Farfalla pointed out to Biagio that he had a faulty premise of using the monies because of his unemployment. Perhaps an appeal to Signor Badassano on humanitarian grounds could work. Biagio was unnerved for he feared a jail sentence. Signor Farfalla reassured him that this was a civil case not a criminal case. Biagio struggled with the turn of events and Rosa was unable to bring him any solace. They made the problem and now it held them in a vise of contradicting thoughts.

The day arrived for the day in court. Badassano, Anna, and Carl with counsel Basile arrived at the appointed hour. Biagio, Rosa, Pino with Signor Farfalla arrived right after them.

The courtroom was sparse in decor and austere. A few chairs in a large room and a dais where the magistrate sat; a simple table for the magistrate and two simple tables for the defense and the plaintiff.

“The court will come to order,” loudly proclaimed the bailiff as the magistrate, Giordano, in a judicial robe, entered the court and went directly to his chair. All rose in respect to the court. Then Giordano motioned all to sit down.

The bailiff read the indictment of Badassano Catanzaro accusing Signor Biagio Artale of misusing funds that were intended to buy land.

The magistrate made introductory remarks as to the seriousness of the charges and that he was by authority of the Italian State to arrive at a just verdict. “Please, Signor Basile, come forward and make your presentation of why we are present here.”

Signor Basile rose slowly and went to the front of the magistrate and said, “This is a very simple, straightforward situation, your honor. Signor Catanzaro inherited property from his late, dearly beloved mother, Signora Agostina Catanzaro, and property willed by his late Uncle Tommaso Sacco. With these properties and newly bought lands, he wanted to start a commercial agricultural vegetable farm. The purchase of new land would increase the acreage so it would be feasible to see this idea come to fruition. However, once the Catanzaros arrived, it became apparent that Biagio Artale had not bought the tracts of land needed. My client seeks recourse for his loss of money, but more so for the absence of land to be cultivated. It is a simple situation when trust and faith in our relatives are denied. With this statement of facts, I will remain indebted to the jurisdiction of this court.” With that, Signor Basile bowed to the magistrate and walked slowly to his chair.

Signor Farfalla addressed the magistrate, “Your honor,” spoke Farfalla, “the accusation



seems harsh accusing my client of giving way to embezzlement, for the truth is sad—sad indeed! The intention of the Artale family was to honor the purchase of land for the Catanzaro family. But fate, cruel fate intervened when Signor Artale was relieved of his employment as Campiero for the House of the Principessa Pignatelli. They were desperate and reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence. Fear emerges in all of us. We, in Sicily, are struggling with a worldwide economic depression that in their desperation they needed to survive. We will do whatever it takes to stay alive. Signor Artale has two sons, four daughters, one married, who are in need of a respectable life. The daughters are not able to contribute to the family resources and the two sons do day-work to eke out a living, but day-work is unreliable. The Artales did not intentionally extort, they were in dire straits.” Signor Farfalla had made his best argument and felt he had defended the Artales. “After all,” thought Signor Farfalla, “they were family and why did the situation degenerate into a civil suit? Why didn't the Catanzaros just take their loss as part of any business deal gone bad? Win some—lose some!”

“What Signor Farfalla says is the truth, Your Honor,” began Signor Basile as he moved to the center of the room facing the magistrate, “but it cannot relieve the Artales of their responsibility in not warning the Catanzaros, prior to their coming to Sicily, that no lands were actually purchased. To make matters worse, there are letters exchanged between them that state lands were purchased. Still, the Artales did not let the Catanzaros know of their dire straits. What kind of logic is this, Signor Farfalla? They let the Catanzaros come and spend greatly for provisions, which if the truth had been known, none of this would have happened. We would not find ourselves here today in the court if a simple letter had been sent to the Catanzaro family by the Artale family.”

Signor Farfalla's retort was, “Be as it may, we are here! Signora Rosa has said often in

our consultation that they were under the impression that the Catanzaros were coming back to Sicily regardless of lands purchased. She truly believed that with his inherited land from his uncle that he would live decently. She felt that once the truth was out that they as a family could come to some solution. Again, they were destitute! Rosa hoped that Anna would understand.”

The arguments were rehashed again by putting Badassano, Anna, Biagio, and Rosa on the witness stand to make similar remarks and arguments as stated by the lawyers. Yet, at the end of the day, it was clear that the money had been used to live instead of buying land.

After some formal statements, the magistrate adjourned for lunch and asked everyone to return after siesta for a verdict. Obviously, the situation was not complicated. When all returned and were seated, the Magistrate came into the court and sat comfortably in his chair. Silence pervaded the room and anxiously all waited for his verdict.

“Signor Catanzaro and Signor Artale please rise and address the court.” said the Magistrate in a solemn, measured voice.

Badassano and Biagio rose from their chairs and faced the Magistrate.

“The court finds the decision related to the matter before us in favor of Badassano Catanzaro. The Court has formally divested Biagio Artale of his properties and transferred the title to Badassano Catanzaro, as the legal and appropriate compensation. The Artale family has not adequately defended their actions to this court. They are in violation of the Code of Law that denies anyone to misuse funds and use them contrary to expectations. So, Signor Catanzaro, the court has prepared new documents given you sole title to these properties.”

Biagio's lawyer made a move to counter the verdict, but the Magistrate pointed out to him that any appeal at this time was not in order.

The Magistrate turned to Badassano and said, “Please, Signor Catanzaro, the bailiff has

the papers ready to be signed.”

Badassano was elated that the verdict was in his favor and was about to speak when Anna whispered in his ear, “You know what we had decided if we won.”

“Your Honor, I am grateful for your verdict, and I have a request to make of the court that this property be divided in two, with one portion to go to Giuseppe Artale and the other to go to Giovanina Artale. I wanted justice, not revenge. I was treated badly by the Artale family, but I will not destroy an entire family. I have come to admire these two young people and without some means, they will never be able to marry and will be denied a future. Both have been good toward me and my family. I want these properties to be their dowry and my patrimony to them.”

The Magistrate stood up and looked at Badassano, moved and very surprised at what he just heard, “May God be my witness to this act and may truth be ever the loftiest of virtues. Signor Catanzaro, what you are doing is most unusual, and I must say has never happened in this court. I am moved by your show of generosity and philanthropy. I am grateful to know a man of honor. I will respect your unselfish decision,” said the Magistrate, reeling from the drama which had just unfolded.

## THE END

Here is the excerpt from my dad’s family history (Clemente, 1997) about the events detailed in “Grace Under Fire”:

It was now dark and my mother went to the door and it opened. Our relatives were alerted by the sound of horse hooves. My mother was greeted enthusiastically and of course, this was my father's first time meeting them. We were slowly escorted into the room lit by a carbide lamp. They did not have electricity in this home. Uncle Biagio, Aunt Rosa, and her children were all there: Giuseppe. (Pino),

Bartolomeo, Giovanina, Maria, and Vincenza. - (Antoinette was married and not at the house.) Most of the evening was filled with exchanging news of relatives; how glad they were to see us; and most likely the usual nice things said of children. I remember feeling overwhelmed. It was late. I was put in an upper story bedroom. I know I was frightened because in the morning my cousin Giovanina came to awaken me and I began to cry. My father and mother came. I told them that I wanted us to go back to the USA. What a problem I set up for my father and mother. They tried to reassure me that things were different and time would help. What I was experiencing was temporary and once I saw everyone in daylight, I should begin to feel better. It was true that I really didn't see my relatives well the night before.

The woman who was Uncle Tommaso's housekeeper was visited by my dad and me. She swore up and down that Uncle Tommaso left very little money and did not leave her secure. My father knew that she most likely absconded with artifacts and money and he told her so. She was frightened by what my dad would do and all he wanted from her was the truth. Little did dad know that shortly he would be up against the real truth which would change his life dramatically.

Within a few days, dad wanted to visit the lands at Porto Sarvo with Pino and his brother Bartolomeo. Dad was enjoying the feel of being on his land and cut wheat with a hand scythe. He stopped for a moment, turned toward his nephews and said, "Let's go visit the bought lands." Both young men paled and were speechless. I know that there was a moment of silence. Jasper was waiting to hear but there was only silence. Then almost inaudible, "Zio, there are no lands!" My father was in utter disbelief. He had just brought his whole family to Sicily and now the lands he needed to become a truck farmer vanished in that one moment. At first, he thought that they were in jest but their sincerity and pale, drawn countenance gave the moment a deadly reality. I know I had a sinking feeling and then my brother and I were not sure what was going to happen. Our day in the countryside came to an abrupt halt and we went back into town. My father told my mother. She was deeply hurt. They then

faced Uncle Biagio and Aunt Rosa.

They had lost their position with the establishment of the Principessa and used the land money. They never believed we would come and they never wrote to warn us that transporting the family would be futile. These talks were in private and my parents took counsel and realized that it was not possible to stay in Sicily. I believe that dad must have discussed this with his friend, Joe Spallino and no doubt was able to find some information and support from the LaBruzzo family.

I don't remember my parents ever discussing plans because there was no private place except bedtime. I can imagine the two bewildered at their well-thought-out plans came to a dead stop. How to handle the relatives? Other friends helped and also lawyers. The decision was made to sell two houses and repair the third so we could live there and then rent it. My relatives were living hand to mouth and depended on Uncle Biagio's two sons. The next decision was to sue Uncle Biagio for reparation since he had not bought the lands. The third decision was to obtain a visa to allow my mother to return to the United States and a decision had to be made for us, the children. Jasper, already 17 years old, literally shared all the transactions that my mother and father were involved with. Jasper helped with the reconstruction of the house and with obtaining a visa for my mother.

Augustine was with my mother and spent time with the daughters of Aunt Rosa. I don't recall any visible show of animosity but I am sure it was kept below the surface. We were living in the same house and there was nowhere to go. It was a family problem and because my father realized the poverty that existed, he showed compassion. Other relatives could not understand why dad had not brought physical harm to my uncle and aunt. My father told them that was not the way to solve a problem. It could be handled by the courts.

Dad hired a mason, Gaspare, and they went to work fixing the house. Dad hired Pino to go to the seashore and bring beach sand so that the mason could incorporate it with the cement. The mason was a fine man. Dad and he got along well. Pino was a gem and dad liked him. Giovanina was a really

nice woman. She was bright, cooperative and was the strength in the family. She seemed to run the affairs in the house very well. Once I saw her bathe her brother's back at the end of a hard day's work. They seemed compatible and seemed to enjoy their relationship.

The court case came up and the judge ruled that all the properties and lands were to be surrendered to my father in reparation. The judge instructed my father to sign the new documents thus taking possession of Uncle Biagio's worldly properties. Dad turned to the judge and said, "Your Honor, I do not want this property. I wanted the satisfaction of the wrong done to me and my family. A wrong that could have been avoided. I wish the court to divide the properties in half and give one portion to Giuseppe Maltese and the other half to Giovanina Maltese so that this will be their dowry. By their having property, they will be free to marry." The judge was moved and so were the lawyers, and dad was honored by them for his show of compassion and his magnificence. "One should do good in this world." was a philosophy of my father. Giovanina and Giuseppe were so moved, no doubt to tears at their good fortune. Both realized that what my father did in that courtroom was far greater than what their parents had done for them. Both did marry and Pino told me that he came to respect my father highly for his foresight and unselfish act. I know my mother was with dad all the way in this decision. For my brother, sister, and myself, this example of my dad and mother branded our consciences for the rest of our lives.

1933 Passport picture. Front row (left to right): Jasper Clemente and Baldassare Clemente

Back row: Bartholomew Clemente and Augustine Clemente. Anna was not an American citizen at this time so was not in the picture.



This is a picture of Anna.